



2022-06-01 -Sufism isnt the peaceful Islamic sect -It grew behind the shadows of swords (1144)

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## Sufism isn't the peaceful Islamic sect you think it is. It grew behind the shadows of swords

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By FAIYAZ AHMAD FYZIE

June 1, 2022



A painting of Sufi dancers. | Representative Image.

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Sufism has often been described as the opposite of Wahhabism. While Islamic empires were created and expanded through brute force, Sufism is said to have spread Islam through love and peace. However, many historical accounts say that the Sufis ventured into only those territories where Islamic power was already established. It means that the spread of Islam by the Sufis was carried out under the shadow of emperors' swords.

Sufism also envisages a purely racist spiritual regimen where the highest office, as well as most administrative positions, are reserved for a particular race/caste. We must see the history of Sufism to explore the facets that hitherto remain in the dark.

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### **Birth of Sufism**

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The story begins with Uthman Ibn Affan, the third Caliph (khalifa) of the Arabs, and the allegations he faced. One of the many grievances that the public raised was that he gave preference to his fellow brethren (Banu Umayyad) in the administration. A revolt soon followed and he was murdered. Under these circumstances, Ali Ibn Abi Talib was appointed as the new Caliph. But the governor of Syria, Mu'awiya I, who belonged to the Banu Umayyad tribe, rebelled against the central authority (the Caliphate) saying that he had an Islamic right (*qisas*) to avenge the murder of his tribe member Uthman, and, until his killers were handed over, would not concede to bait (*bay'ah*)—declare allegiance—to the newly appointed Caliph.

Taking cognisance of this open challenge to his authority, the newly appointed Caliph Ali declared Mu'awiya a rebel and personally initiated military action against him. But even after marching against Mu'awiya several times during his reign, he could never succeed. Thus, two parallel Islamic regimes continued to function, and both were led by two sub-castes of the Quraysh tribe.

After Ali, his eldest son Hasan (who was born from Fatima) was appointed Caliph. But he chose to sign a treaty with Mu'awiya and handed over the Caliphate to him. When the Caliphate went to another sub-caste of the Quraysh — the Banu Umayyads — some people rebelled against them, saying that the Banu Hashim tribe (Sayyid caste) was the real claimant to the rights of the Caliphate. They asserted that it should remain in the lineage of Muhammad's daughter Fatima and Ali (Muhammad's cousin who later became his son-in-law) because it was closer to the lineage of Muhammad.

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After this, the rebels started the fight to reclaim the Caliphate, supported by another sub-caste of the Quraysh named Banu Abbas. The Banu Abbas tribe (Abbasids) succeeded in reclaiming the Caliphate. During the rule of the Abbasids, several people from the Sayyid caste chose the path of revolt against the Caliphate, saying that since they were the children of Ali-Fatima—the real family of Muhammad—they had a natural right over the Caliphate. However, they could never be completely successful.

Since the Sayyid caste could not achieve physical authority (Caliphate), it led to the foundation of the concept of 'spiritual authority'—referred to as the Sufi tradition. Many anecdotal stories were created to establish the Sufi tradition as an integral part of Islam. They have become so famous over time that now they seem to be perceived as the truth.

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### **Hierarchy of spirituality**

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Under the Sufi traditions, the concept of 'spiritual positions' and their scope of operation (jurisdiction) have also been propounded for the functioning of the system. The position of Sufi/Wali can be assumed only by those whose lineage comes from Muhammad's grandsons (daughter's sons) Hasan-Husain and then ultimately again merges with Mohammad's lineage through Ali-Fatima. Among these, the Ghawth ('the help') is the supreme position. Under him come the Qutbs ('axis, pole'). However, in some places, Ghawths and Qutbs are considered equals. Then come the three Niqbas/Nuqabas ('leaders'). Then the five Amnas. They are followed by seven Awtad or Abrar ('stakes' or 'props' of faith). Then come 40 Abdals ('substitutes'). Lastly, there are 300 Akhyars.

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Everyone's jurisdiction, authority, and power were different in the order and no one is allowed to encroach on others' territory. After the demise of an Auliya/Wali/Sufi of the upper rank, a Sufi from the lower rank gets promoted and the subsequent vacancies are filled thus.

Apart from being a Sayyid, there are other essential conditions that Sufism hinges on. For example, a Wali/Sufi/Pir (with a couple of exceptions) must be a male. The Ghawths, Qutbs, Abdals, etc. would have to live in secrecy and the common people could know which Wali/Sufi was ranked as Ghawth, Qutb or Abdal. Only the revered Sufis/Walis could know their address and who the dictator (*kshtrap*) of a particular region is. Often only after the death of a top-ranked Sufi, it could be revealed what rank he was.

From America to India, those who follow the Sufi tradition believe that it is these Ghawths, Qutbs, Abdals, etc., who run the *nizam* (system) of the entire world, that they are the true representatives of God.

Several anecdotal stories can be found in the annals of Sufism. One of them tells the tale of a king traveling from Punjab to Delhi, who goes to seek permission and blessing from the Wali before embarking on the journey. The Wali allows him to leave with a blessing but says that when he reaches a certain place, he should again take permission and blessing from another Wali because his jurisdiction ends there. His blessings would only work within his territory.

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### **Sufi traditions and Sayyidism**

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In the Sufi tradition, there is also a process of giving khilafat (leadership), under which a Caliph bestows rights to one of his murids (disciples) for giving out baits who are later called the Caliph,

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Pir or Murshad of that Sufi tradition. Here too, the famous book of Hadith (based on Muhammad's deeds and preaching) written by scholar Muhammad al-Bukhari has a reference to Hadith "Al-Aimtu Main al-Quraysh", that is, a leader (Amir, Caliph) from Quraysh (Sayyid, Sheikh) community. Even among the Sayyids, Fatimi Sayyids are preferred for the khilafat. This tradition continues to this day.

The place where the tomb of a Sufi or Pir is situated is called dargah/darbar—royal court. Sufis or Pirs also add Shah (which means the king) as a prefix or suffix to their name. Their *murids* (disciples) refer to them as *sarkar* (master). They can be heard saying, "*sarkar ka yeh huqm hai, sarkar aane wale hain, sarkaar ke huzur mein pesh hona hai...*" (Master has ordered this, the master is on his way, we are present in the company of master...)

From anecdotes to hierarchy, the Sufi traditions lend themselves toward a kind of indirect determination of authority. In a way, Sufis or Pirs used to run a parallel system and often worked to get the man of their choice into the government and also succeeded in installing their choice as the *badshah*. At one point in time, and in some places even today, their position is like that of a medieval pope. Even today Ashraf Sufis, Walis and Ulemas interfere in the administration by establishing a proximity with the government of the day.

In all its essence, the Sufi tradition is just an enabler of Sayyidism.

*Faiyaz Ahmad Fyzie is author, translator, columnist, media panelist, social activist, and medical doctor by profession. Views are personal.*

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**No, it is a misconception that Sufism is the peaceful branch of Islam - they were an instrument of violent jihad.** Sufis either actively participated in Jihad and /or enjoyed booty from jihad. They openly took part in the slaughter and forced conversion of unbelievers. Snippet#1 talks about Sufi Sarmast who accompanied the army of the Delhi Sultanate that invaded parts of southern India (present day Karnataka). Snippet #2-3 show how Sufis carried out mass conversion of Hindus in Kashmir.

This interpretation might clarify the nature of Sufi Sarmast's alleged role in the conversion of Hindus to Islam. Given what we know of the initial reaction to other Muslim armies in the Deccan during the late thirteenth century, it is reasonable to assume that some sort of military engagement did take place between Sufi Sarmast's group of warrior-followers and the indigenous peoples of the Bijapur plateau. In this case the Sufi's purported role in the peaceful conversion of Hindus to Islam would seem highly unlikely, and probably represents an embellishment that accrued to the tradition over centuries of oral transmission. On the other hand it is quite possible that Sufi Sarmast, as an armed Sufi adventurer accompanying a North Indian army, did attempt conversions in the manner often considered typical for Islam—by the sword. But his success in this endeavor must certainly have been limited. For there appears a suicidal quality about the penetration of a militant Sufi in territory which, though politically <sup>1</sup> mented, was still dominated by non-Muslims.

Source: The sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700 by R. M. Eaton

Snippet#2 and 3 talks about how thousands of Kashmiri Hindu families were force convert by a sufi named Shamsud-Din Iraqi. That is how Kashmir, a Hindu region, became 97% Muslim.

**Conversion by horrifying Sufis in Kashmir:** Persian chronicles, *Baharistan-i-Shahi* and *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* (1620), give somewhat detailed accounts of the involvement of Sufi saints in the conversion of Hindus of Kashmir to Islam. The greatest Sufi to arrive in Kashmir was Amir Shamsud-Din Muhammad Iraqi. He formed a strong alliance with Malik Musa Raina, who became the administrator of Kashmir in 1501. Earlier Sultan Zainul Abedin (1423–74), the only tolerant and liberal Muslim ruler of Kashmir, had allowed religious freedom enabling the flourishing Hinduism, 'which had been stamped out in the (earlier) reign of Sikandar the Iconoclast'.<sup>279</sup> With the patronage and authority of Malik Raina, records *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, 'Amir Shamsud-Din Muhammad undertook wholesale destruction of all those idol-houses as well as total ruination of the very foundation of infidelity and disbelief. On the site of every idol-house he destroyed, he ordered the construction of a mosque for offering prayers after the Islamic manner'.<sup>280</sup> *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, a historical account of Kashmir written by Haidar Malik Chadurah, who served in Sultan Yusuf Shah's Court (1579–86), records: 'Sheikh Shams-ud-Din reached Kashmir. He began destroying the places of worship and the temples of the Hindus and made an effort to achieve the objectives'.<sup>281</sup> A medieval chronicle, entitled

278. For the Sufis, building of their shrines at the site of destroyed temples was meant for showing their utter contempt and disrespect for the religion of infidels.

279. Pundit, p. 74; also discussed above

280. Ibid, p. 10-14

281. Chadurah HM (1991) *Tarikh-Kashmir*, ed. & trans. Razia Bano, Delhi, p. 102-03

Source: Islamic Jihad - A Legacy of Forced Conversion, Imperialism and Slavery by M.A. Khan

*Tohfat-ul-Ahbab*, records that 'on the instance of Shamsud-Din Iraqi, Musa Raina had issued orders that everyday 1,500 to 2,000 infidels be brought to the doorstep of Mir Shamsud-Din by his followers. They would remove their sacred thread (zunnar), administer Kelima (Muslim profession of faith) to them, circumcise them and make them eat beef'. There they became Muslim. *Tarikh-i-Hasan Khuihami* notes of the conversion of Hindus to Islam by Shamsud-Din Iraqi that 'twenty-four thousand Hindu families were converted to Iraqi's faith by force and compulsion (qahran wa jabran)'.<sup>282</sup>

282. Pundit, p. 105-106

Source: Islamic Jihad - A Legacy of Forced Conversion, Imperialism and Slavery by M.A. Khan

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Amir Khasrau showed delight in describing the barbaric slaughter of Hindu captives by Muslim warriors. Describing Khizr Khan's order to massacre 30,000 Hindus in the conquest of Chitor in 1303, he gloated: 'Praise be to God! That he so ordered the massacre of all chiefs of Hind out of the pale of Islam, by his infidel-smiting swords... in the name of this Khalifa of God, that heterodoxy has no rights (in India).'<sup>260</sup> He took poetic delight in describing Malik Kafur's destruction of a famous Hindu temple in South India and the grisly slaughter of the Hindus and their priests therein.<sup>261</sup> In describing the slaughter, he wrote, '...the heads of brahmins and idolaters danced from their necks and fell to the ground at their feet, and blood flowed in torrents.' In his bigoted delight at the miserable subjugation of Hindus and the barbarous triumph of Islam in India, he wrote:

Source: Islamic Jihad - A Legacy of Forced Conversion, Imperialism and Slavery by M.A. Khan

The whole country, by means of the sword of our holy warriors, has become like a forest denuded of its thorns by fire? Islam is triumphant, idolatry is subdued. Had not the Law granted exemption from death by the payment of poll-tax, the very name of Hind, root and branch, would have been extinguished.<sup>262</sup>

Amir Khasrau described many instances of barbaric cruelty, often of catastrophic proportions, inflicted by Muslim conquerors upon the Hindus. But nowhere did he show any sign of grief or remorse, but only gloating delight. While describing those acts of barbarism, he invariably expressed gratitude to Allah, and glory to

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Omar Khan

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Sufism is and was the true way to Islam. Actually what is Sufism? Sufism is a mentioned way in Quran to spiritually purification of soul. If you look at history, you will find our Prophet Hz Mohammed sm has practiced Sufism in the cave for long 15 years, and at the end he found his creator.

Our Prophet (pubh) kept beard, we keep beard. Our Prophet offer salat, we offer salat. Our Prophet did Hajj, Jakat, Fitra, we do the same. But shocking our Prophet pubh has mediated for 15 long years, but we don't accept it.

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Dino Mustafić, Muslim

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There is no peaceful or violent branch of Islam, except for the Wahhabism and sister sects.

Sufism could be considered peaceful, bot not more than the mainstream Islam. Not Arabslam, but Islam.

Yes, there's arabslam too.

Sufism deals with thinking and trying to be as smart as possible. Learn everything. Avoid fighting.

Example, the prophet said, for people who are fasting, and when somebody provokes, should say: "leave me alone, I'm fasting". So a Muslim should actually always say that and be in that state.



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Islam is plain Islam , with one revealed book, the Quran.

What you call branches , are basically interpretations by Muslim scholars and intellectuals about various aspects of Islam . All Muslims are free to study these interpretations, and follow them if they feel like it.

Sufism is not a branch. It's sort of a intellectual pathway towards the same goal that Islam sets for us, which is to please Allah by being beneficial to his creation individually and as a whole to the community , be it Muslim or non Muslim

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**Shamim Ali**, former Former Staff Geoscientist at Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd (2010-2016)

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Sufism :

Sufism or Tassawuf is not a sect in Islam. In simple expression, these are group of people who concentrate more on spiritual aspects of Islam . They would go out in the jungle or out side the village in isolation and try clean their mind , their soul from worldly affair focusing TOTALLY towards Allah . Sufis were very pious (Surah 2Verse 177 ) people and in their dealings with non Muslims they impressed the local non Muslim population.

As interaction between the non - Muslim and Sufi increases and they become aware of universal nature of Islam - the knowledge of Islam

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more simple way.

- The first and foremost important rule of Sufi Islam is worship and praise of Almighty Allah.

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This Salafism vs Sufism is a very big controversy surrounding Islam. And a lot of people, even the moderate or non-Salafists hate the Sufis. Some people mix between different kinds of philosophical positions and tag the Sufis as non-Muslims. Others believe true Islam is not compatible with Sufism. I'm going to expound this topic as best as possible. And also try to clarify the misconceptions people have regarding Sufism. Okay, this is going to be big but I'll try to break it down into different parts to look it more easy.

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Does it? As I recall, Mohammad spent an inordinate amount of time praising the character of Christian monastics, and another Christian monk is credited with being the first to recognise his prophetic status. The *hanifs* (Arab monotheists) who preceded Mohammad - and one of whom is credited with preventing him from making sacrifice - were also ascetics. The same admiration for ascetics can be said to run through the entire early (not to mention medieval) Islamic tradition. For that matter, wh

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Salafi (rooted in Wahhabi) is the way to chaos. In my understanding, Sufism is the way for world peace, because Sufism, which we believe is the true spirit of Prophet Muhammad [a.s.] and all other prophets, is all about oneness and unity. There is no "Christianity", or "Hinduism" in the Sufi way, these are just traditions that are common in different parts of the world which politicians use to create division among people, there is just love for God and the one who loves God more is the one who has

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